



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

Closing Remarks
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Launch of UNOCT's Threat Assessment Models Programme

New York, USA, 7 September 2021

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Twenty years ago, terrorists attacked the United States with a previously unthinkable level of violence. In the span of a little more than an hour, nearly 3,000 people from some 90 countries perished, while thousands more were wounded or sickened.

Like most of you, I remember exactly where I was and what I was doing when the 9/11 attacks occurred.

As I made my way home from the U.S. State Department that day, I walked with other stranded government workers down the highway, past the still burning wreckage of the Pentagon, where just a few days before I had been serving on a Navy reserve assignment. The terrorists killed a number of my shipmates and wounded and disabled others.

Although unscathed myself, my world was changed forever, just as it was for many others that day.

Beyond the unprecedented level of violence, our world observed - in shock and horror - an equally unbelievable level of malicious ingenuity in exploiting our weaknesses.

Twenty years on, civil aviation remains an attractive target and a channel for terrorism. We continue to be reminded of the vulnerabilities to civil aviation with tragic events such as the 2016 attacks at the Brussels and Istanbul airports. But perhaps less known is that other thwarted attacks could also have caused great loss.

In 2006, law enforcement authorities in the United Kingdom successfully foiled an attempted attack using liquid explosives. This prompted significant innovation and adjustments to airport screening capabilities.

On Christmas Day 2009, despite authorities having received indications of a planned attack, a young suicide bomber was able to board Northwest Airlines Flight 253 bound from Amsterdam to Detroit; fortunately, the improvised explosive device concealed in the bomber's undergarments failed to explode, and passengers were able to subdue him and extinguish the flames that might still have set off the explosives.

More recently, in July 2017, the Islamic State was able to send explosives undetected through the air cargo network. Fortunately, this was foiled in what we now know as the Sydney plane plot. Although this incident underscores the vulnerabilities of the aviation security ecosystem in our interconnected world, it also galvanized efforts to tackle them in a more integrated, cohesive manner.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Security is a shared responsibility.

And together, we continue to evolve, adapt, and innovate to improve the global aviation security framework. Our colleagues and friends at the International Civil Aviation Organization have developed a robust Global Aviation Security Plan along with a set of Standards and Recommended Practices for the security of international air transport.

However, each of us has to work to avoid blind spots. It begins with strengthening our cooperation at the national level, moving beyond siloed organizations, and pooling our collective resources and expertise to ensure a safe air travel network. We must take a step further in closing any upstream gaps that prevent key information from reaching the right people, at the right time.

Because the effectiveness of our aviation security infrastructure is only as good as the information coming to inform it.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism has launched the Threat Assessment Models Programme in response to Security Council Resolution 2309 on the need for enhanced inter-agency cooperation and information exchange on threats in order to prevent terrorist attacks to civil aviation. The TAM programme also responds to the General Assembly's call in its latest review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy for a secure global civil aviation system.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism looks forward to working with Member States to strengthen cooperation between counter terrorism and Civil Aviation Security stakeholders.

Before closing this launch event, I would like to thank all the speakers for their great presentations and insights today, with special thanks to our programme partners who have provided critical support and expertise to bring the TAM Programme to life. I would also like to thank all of you, dear participants, for spending your morning with us today for what I hope was an informative session that will leave each of us thinking about what more can be done.

We look forward to the road ahead and please get in touch with our Team should you want to discuss the TAM Programme further.

Thank you.